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Viewing cable 09STOCKHOLM557, AMBASSADOR'S FIRST MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09STOCKHOLM557	2009-08-31 15:43	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Stockholm

Appears in these articles:

http://svtplay.se/v/2256485/dokument_inifran/de_hemliga_telegrammen

VZCZCXRO5342
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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4675
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 000557

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/31/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [AF](#) [TU](#) [SW](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FIRST MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
CARL BILD

Classified By: Amb. Matthew Barzun for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador paid his first call on Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt August 28. The tone of the meeting was very positive, yet casual, as they exchanged anecdotes about their common experiences in the world of information technology. Highlights of the meeting included:

--On Guantanamo closure, Bildt said he knew the issue was important, but merely repeated the official line that UNHCR involvement was important and that he could not interfere with the Swedish independent agency tasked with refugee decisions.

--On Turkey, Bildt reiterated Swedish hopes to open one or two accession chapters before the end of their EU Presidency in December and lamented the slow pace of Turkish decision-making.

--On Afghanistan, Bildt noted his recent conversations with Amb. Holbrooke and stressed the importance of unity in the international community. He expressed concern over the deteriorating security situation in the country and the possibility of rising tensions between Pashtuns and other tribes. End Summary.

Guantanamo Closure

12. (C) The Ambassador asked for Bildt's guidance on Guantanamo. Bildt reiterated the Government line that Ministers cannot decide such an issue and the independent Swedish Migration Board must determine who enters Sweden as a refugee. He stated that "UNHCR requests are normally taken," but "whether or not a UNHCR request is enough for Sweden is unknown." Bildt added that "it's a tricky issue, but important. We are very much aware of it."

Turkey

13. (C) On Turkey's EU accession, Bildt said the Swedes hope that one to two chapters will be opened during their Presidency, but such would depend on both the Cypriots and the Turks. "The Turks need to make decisions and it doesn't help that their parliament is on an extended vacation." Bildt continued that the Kurdish issue is "highly significant and sensitive and consumes Turkey's efforts now." He said that it is good that both the U.S. and Sweden support the Kurds, adding that the Kurds know that having Turkey as an EU member will be good for them even while Turkish nationalists would be unhappy with membership.

Afghanistan

14. (C) Asked how things were going in Afghanistan, Bildt simply answered "very badly." He said over the past six months, conditions have worsened. The election results are very complicated and require careful management by the international community. Bildt said that he recently met Amb. Holbrooke, Peter Galbraith, and Barnett Rubin in Istanbul. Their discussion covered all possible scenarios in Afghanistan and each was profoundly difficult. Bildt said that if the international community does not influence Afghanistan in the right way, the Afghan political system will fracture and the outcome will be worse than under the Taliban system. Bildt opined that the Taliban will never conquer the country--even if the international community pulls out--but could significantly disrupt and destroy Afghanistan. If the Pashtuns fall out with the others and start fighting the Northern Alliance over election results, then the situation will seriously worsen. Bildt said that the situation in Afghanistan is unlike the situation in the Balkans or Caucasus because all of the Afghan actors are fighting for power in Kabul and lack secessionist desires. All international actors need to unite and insist that "we won't play games."

15. (C) Bildt said that involving the Turks and Iranians in Afghanistan is a good thing because they have the true knowledge of the country. He cited examples, including that the Pashtun language is nearly the same as Persian and all books sold in Kabul are printed in Tehran. He also said that in his last trip to Mazar-e Sharif, he spent 45 minutes

talking with the Turkish Consul-General, who knew "everything." Bildt argued that the international community needs to make use of the people who really know Afghanistan.

Comment

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¶6. (C) The shared experiences of the Ambassador and FM Bildt in the field of information technology quickly established rapport. Bildt was excited over their numerous shared IT contacts and appreciated the opportunity to exchange stories with a peer about the industry. IT is one of Bildt's passions--next to sailing and European history. He lamented that Sweden's MFA is behind the technological wave: Blackberries are a "sensitive subject" at the MFA, he said, adding that "Sweden can make a substantive contribution to an IT museum."

BARZUN